A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton
March, 2000

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EDMONTON HOMELESSNESS COUNT COMMITTEE

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Homelessness in Edmonton

A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton

conducted March 23, 2000 by the
Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee

SUMMARY

The third count of the homeless found 1125 homeless* persons in the City of Edmonton. Of these, 579 were absolute homeless - having no housing alternative - and 546 were sheltered homeless - living in emergency accommodations.

The Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee organized the count, applying the methodology used in the previous counts (March and November 1999), to ensure a consistent 'snapshot' of the homeless population. Employing the same methodology enables the monitoring of changes and trends of the homeless population. March 23, 2000 was selected for the twenty-four hour count period. In order to conduct the count, the Count Committee acquired the active support of approximately 90 volunteers, in addition to the community serving the homeless.

- There were 60 families counted, encompassing 117 children under the age of 15 and 76 caregivers. Among the families, 74% of the individuals were absolute homeless, while 26% stayed at shelters.
- A majority of the homeless were single - 932 of the 1125 total. Among them, 47% were absolute homeless compared with 53% staying at shelters.
- From the perspective of observed gender, most of the homeless were male (69% or 635, not including children in families) and 30% or 271 were female. The percentage of males and females was almost equally divided between the sheltered and absolute homeless.

* **Definition:**
The Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee used the following definition of the homeless for its work.

Absolute homeless: Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives).
During the March 23rd count, this was represented by people who, when asked on the street or within agencies like drop-in centres, bottle depots or food bank(s), self reported that they had no permanent place to reside. They may have ended up sleeping 'on the street' or in a stairwell that night, or alternatively they may have stayed with a friend or found an emergency shelter space.

- **Sheltered homeless:** Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay).
During the March 23rd count, this was represented by people who were registered to stay in approved emergency shelters.

Homelessness in Edmonton

- Forty-nine percent were observed to be Caucasian followed by 40% Aboriginal and 11% "other." Most Caucasians were sheltered, whereas 71% of Aboriginal people were absolute homeless.
- Age groups ranged from the majority being adults (725 or 70% between 19 and 54 years) to the next largest group being children (117 or 11%), 112 youth (11%) and 81 seniors (8%) age 55 years or over.
- A count of people turned away by providers and crisis services identified 67, while an additional 62 individuals were discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but without a permanent residence.

BACKGROUND

The Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee was formed in September 1999 as a working group of The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing. The Count Committee was created to implement the recommendation detailed in the May 1999 report *Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action* that: "the count be continued on a regular basis so trends of the homeless population can be monitored".

For the purpose of the count, the Count Committee used the definition of homeless persons as outlined in the report *Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action*:

"1. Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives)" and

"2. Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay)."

March 23, 2000 was count day - a spring weekday.

The following partners collaborated and actively participated in the organization and implementation of the count: the City of Edmonton, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Alberta Community Development, the Government of Canada, the community serving the homeless and many volunteers.

METHOD

Preparations for the count involved contacting all organizations and community agencies who work with those individuals and/or families facing issues of homelessness.

The method included a direct and indirect count to ensure as much thoroughness and accuracy as possible.

The **direct count** involved a count of people in emergency shelter beds.

The **indirect count** attempted to capture the invisible homeless through:

- **street count,** asking people on the street if they have a permanent residence to return to that night
- **agency count,** asking people at agencies (such as the food bank, drop-in centres and bottle depots) if they have a permanent residence for that night
- **turnaway count** of people turned away by providers and crisis services because no appropriate housing was available
- **discharge count** of people either discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but with no permanent residence to go to.

Demographics gathered during the count included observed gender, race and age. Family status was also documented; including the number of caregivers, and the number of dependent children. Forms documenting count results were faxed to a central number the next day, March 24, 2000.

The Count Committee acknowledges that the count methodology has inherent limitations and that the results reflect only a point-in-time. However, in order to report the count findings in a consistent manner that would allow for comparison, the March 23rd count used the same methodology of that used for the March and November 1999 counts.

Implementation of the count relied on the cooperation and involvement of the community serving the homeless and a team of volunteers. The community was divided into the following groups, with a coordinator assigned to organize and implement the count:

- institutions (hospitals/jails)
- inner-city agencies
- streets
- shelters (youth, adult and families)
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
- adult group homes
- youth group homes
- seniors facilities
- subsidized housing
- housing registries
- aboriginal agencies and housing
- malls (outreach programs)
- bottle depots
- library
- food banks
- other miscellaneous crisis and assistance services

COUNT RESULTS

A total of 1125 homeless persons were counted on March 23, 2000 in Edmonton: 579 absolute homeless (51%) and 546 sheltered homeless (49%). This includes singles as well as the adults and children within families.

TOTAL HOMELESS*		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	579	51
Sheltered Homeless	546	49
Total Homeless	1125	100

* Includes - Singles, Adults in Families and Children in Families

Family Status

A majority of individuals counted were single. Among the single homeless, 436 (47%) were absolutely homeless compared with 496 (53%) who were staying at shelters.

SINGLE HOMELESS*		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	436	47
Sheltered Homeless	496	53
Total Homeless	932	100

* Includes - Singles Without Children

There were 60 families counted, encompassing 117 children under the age of 15 and 76 caregivers. Among families, 74% of the individuals were absolutely homeless, while 26% stayed at shelters. There were 86 children and 57 caregivers among the absolute homeless; 31 children and 19 caregivers among the sheltered homeless families.

Families having one caregiver totaled 44, while 16 had two-or-more caregivers. Among the absolute homeless, 25 families had one caregiver while approximately 16 had two-or-more caregivers. At shelters, 100% of the families had one caregiver, therefore no families having two-or-more caregivers were identified. Caregivers includes men, women and seniors (55 years and over).

HOMELESS IN FAMILIES								
	Caregivers By Category				Children		Total	
	2 or more	%	Single	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	32	17	25	13	86	45	143	74
Sheltered Homeless	0	0	19	10	31	16	50	26
Total Homeless	32	17	44	23	117	61	193	100

Gender

Sixty-nine percent of the homeless were male, totaling 635 compared to 271 females. Ten of those counted as absolute homeless were not identified by gender. The percentage of males and females was almost equally divided between sheltered and absolute homeless.

One shelter did not report observed gender, therefore, these numbers were not recorded.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED GENDER*								
	Males		Females		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	351	38	116	13	10	1.1	477	52
Sheltered Homeless	284	31	155	17	2	0.2	441	48
Total Homeless	635	69	271	30	12	1.3	918	100

* Does Not Include Children in Families

Race

Through observations, 11% of the homeless were not classified as being either Caucasian or Aboriginal. Caucasians formed the highest percentage (49%), while 40% were observed as Aboriginal. More Caucasians were sheltered (277 compared to 176 absolute homeless), whereas 71% of all Aboriginal individuals were absolute homeless (259 compared to 107 sheltered).

Two shelters did not report observed race. The numbers from one shelter were recorded as "other" sheltered homeless.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED RACE*								
	Caucasian		Aboriginal		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	176	19	259	28	42	5	477	52
Sheltered Homeless	277	30	107	12	57	6	441	48
Total Homeless	453	49	366	40	99	11	918	100

* Does Not Include Children in Families

Age

Adults between 19 and 54 years old were the predominant age group among the homeless, at 725 or 70%. The next largest group was children (117 at 11%), then youth 15 to 18 years (112 at 11%) and seniors 55 years and over (81 at 8%).

The majority of children (86 of 117) were absolute homeless compared to 31 sheltered. Among seniors, the majority were absolute homeless. Adults were almost divided equally between absolute and sheltered homeless. Sixty-three percent of the youth were sheltered homeless.

One shelter did not report observed age, therefore, these numbers were not recorded.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED AGE*

	Children		Youth		Adult		Senior		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	86	8	42	4	385	37	50	5	563	54
Sheltered Homeless	31	3	70	7	340	33	31	3	472	46
Total Homeless	117	11	112	11	725	70	81	8	1035	100

* CHILDREN (in Families) YOUTH = 15-18 Years ADULT = 19-54 Years SENIOR = 55+ Years

Turnaways & Discharges

A tally was also taken of the number of people denied a bed because the facility was full or the client didn't meet entrance standards (by, for example, exhibiting violent behavior) and who declared having no home to return to. On count day, 42 individuals were turned away from housing providers (63%) and shelters (37%). Discharges totaled 62 people, including 33 from jails, hospitals and/or group homes. These people were not included in the reported number of absolute or sheltered homeless.

COUNT OF TURNAWAYS & DISCHARGES*

	Turnaways		Discharges	
	No.	%	No.	%
Housing Providers	42	63	29	47
Jails/Hospitals/Group Homes	0	0	33	53
Shelters	25	37	0	0
Total	67	100	62	100

* Turnaways & Discharges Declaring No Home To Return To

Shelter-by-Shelter Numbers: Registered and Turnaways

The number of homeless who were housed or turned away by each participating shelter on March 23rd is outlined in the table below. Herb Jamieson Centre housed the highest number, at 171 (34%); Edmonton's Women Shelter (WIN 1) turned away the highest number, at 11 (44%).

REGISTERED AND TURNAWAYS FROM SHELTERS						
Shelter Name	**Available Spaces**	**No. Registered**	**% Occupancy**	**Percentage of Total Registered**	**No. Turned Away**	**Percentage of Total**
Herb Jamieson	175	171	98	34	2	8
W.E.A.C.	62	76	123	15	0	0
Sally-Ann - Mats	10	11	110	2	0	0
George Spady	72	83	115	16	3	12
Urban Manor	62	62	100	12	4	16
WIN 1	21	16	76	3	11	44
WIN 11	30	19	63	4	5	20
Lurana	25	39	156	8	0	0
Safe House*	6	??	??	??	0	0
Prot. Safe House	5	5	100	1	0	0
S.F.I. Hotels	-	8	??	2	0	0
Inner City Youth	13	13	100	3	0	0
Youth Emergency	28	43	154	8	0	0
Youth Receiving*	??	??	??	??	0	0
Total	509	546	100	100	25	100

* Numbers Not Attained

COUNT COMPARISON

It is not appropriate to suggest that a trend(s) can be observed by comparing the results from the three counts (March/November 1999 and March 2000) or to speculate as to why a particular number is up or down. As additional counts are conducted we will begin to get a picture of the trend(s) year after year. Unfortunately the March 2000 count results clearly show that homelessness continues to be a significant issue in Edmonton. With this in mind, the following graphs (page 8) illustrate the numeric differences between the three counts.

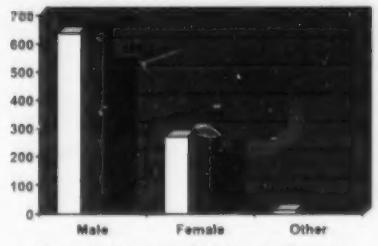
COUNT FINDINGS COMPARISON

Total Homeless in Edmonton

Includes: Singles, Adults in Families & Children in Families

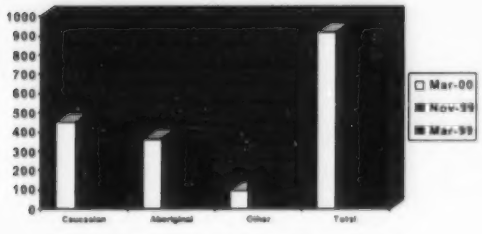
Includes: Singles Without Chilen

Total Homeless By Observed Gender



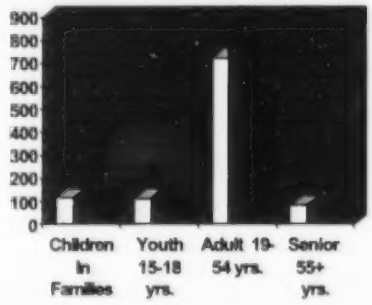
Does Not Include Children In Families

Total Homeless By Observed Race



Does Not Include Chilen In Families

Total Homeless By Observed Age



Total Turnaways & Discharges

Turnaways & Discharges Declaring No Home To Return To

THANKS TO THE COMMUNITY:

The Count Committee would like to express their sincere appreciation and thank the many agencies and volunteers who donated their time to complete the third homeless count. Particularly we would like to recognize the efforts of Constable Elvin Toy and The Edmonton City Police Service, as well as Gary Trudel who again provided insight about street life to the volunteers prior to the count.